Strengthening Public Participation in Waste Management in Greece

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Public participation: What does it mean?

Involvement of the public in environmental policy making & implementation

Three approaches to public participation:

• Access to information / information dissemination
• Submission of comments
• Active participation - consultation
Public Participation Benefits

“There is no denial that public participation can contribute to deliver effective, legitimate and efficient environmental policies in a multi-level context. However, we need to better understand which contextual or process factors make best-practice cases good enough in order to successfully learn from them.”

Newig & Fritch, 2009 “Environmental Governance: Participatory, Multi-Level – and Effective?”. Environmental Policy and Governance 19, 197-214
Public Participation (PP) in Greece
PP in Greece: The reality ...

Process
- “Public communication” / absence of two-way communication (at best: ad-hoc public participation)
- Corporatist (not participatory) governance style
- Involvement of local stakeholders but not local community
- Limited institutional forms for participation (e.g. website)

Context
- Mistrust between authorities and local residents
- Underestimation of local people’s knowledge and perceptions
- General lack of participation culture

- Management of Natura 2000 sites (Apostolopoulou, Drakou & Pediaditi, 2012): unclear roles in the process; power laden participation processes / clientelism
Good examples in Greece: Anthemountas River Basin

- Forum for social dialogue
- Consultation Committee
  - Goal: collaborative development of policy; Open meetings; Participants decided by 2\(^{nd}\) Forum meeting
- Work groups
- Meetings with schools, farmers’ cooperatives, Municipal Councils, local decision makers
- Goals / criteria for success:
  - wide public participation, free access to information; agreement on goal of consultation; commitment for implementation of agreed policy; collaboration and trust; reliability of participants; transparency of process
Good examples in Greece: Evrotas River Basin

- Forums / public meetings (information, exchange of opinions)
- Visits to municipalities / meeting with Municipal Councils
- Questionnaires to wider public
- Schools / environmental education
- Specific people in Prefecture committed to the project
- Collaboration of 2 levels of government (local and prefecture)
- Inclusion of experts as facilitators
- Observatory for implementation of management plan

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Public Participation (PP) in Waste Management in Greece
Waste Management – Characteristics

- Embraces different decision making types (i.e. legislative, strategic, individual)
- Highly politicized (conflicting interests at all levels)
- Technically complicated
- Policy with a longer time frame
- Issue: an “environmental burden” (as perceived)
EU Legislative Framework

Aarhus Convention
• Principles: openness/transparency, participation, accountability & clear roles, effectiveness, coherence (in policies)
• Rights to the public:
  • Participation early through effective opportunities
  • Public entitled to express comments and opinions
  • Reasonable time-frames provided at every step

• Opportunity to participate at waste management plans & prevention programs and access to them
• Plans/programs placed on a publicly available website
Greek Legislative Framework

N4048/2012 (Regulatory Consultation)

- Objective: timely information / dissemination
- Via the website www.opengov.gr
- 2 phases (1st for goal and expected results: >2 weeks; 2nd comments by article: >3 weeks)

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The process

Waste Management – The case of Peloponnese

• Determination of “object” as a whole: “Integrated Waste Management for the Region of Peloponnese” – no consultation – exclusion of the public and municipalities from the planning process

• No consultation on the selection of the sites for the treatment facilities.

• Poor dissemination of information - only electronic consultation
The context

• Limited culture of participation
• Lack of long-term planning
• Public mistrust due to:
  • ineffective operation of existing facilities
  • the well embraced public perception that authorities serve private interests rather than concern for public good
• Different levels of government not communicating effectively
• Clientelism
Suggestions for stronger public participation in waste management

- Process: transparent, including all levels of government, from early stages (policy design) and commitment to results
- Focus on long term perspective and benefits
- Multi-method approach (including: web, forums, presentations, education, face-to-face, questionnaires, Consultation Committee ...)
- Conflict resolution experts
- Workshops etc. to cultivate culture of participation: in different levels of government, schools etc.
- Show-case good examples
Thank you for your attention!